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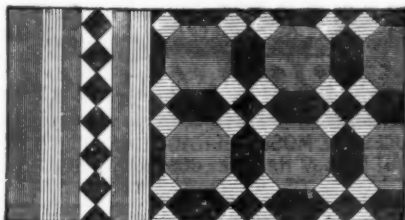
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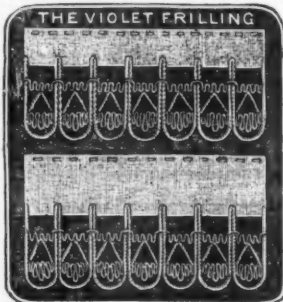
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SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1880.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## THE DUKE'S CHILDREN.

BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

### CHAPTER XLIX. THE MAJOR'S FATE.

THE affair of Prime Minister and the nail was not allowed to fade away into obscurity. Through September and October it was made matter for pungent enquiry. The Jockey Club was alive. Mr. Pook was very instant—with many Pookites anxious to free themselves from suspicion. Sporting men declared that the honour of the turf required that every detail of the case should be laid open. But by the end of October, though every detail had been surmised, nothing had in truth been discovered. Nobody doubted but that Tifto had driven the nail into the horse's foot, and that Green and Gilbert Villiers had shared the bulk of the plunder. They had gone off on their travels together, and the fact that each of them had been in possession of about twenty thousand pounds was proved. But then there is no law against two gentlemen having such a sum of money. It was notorious that Captain Green and Mr. Gilbert Villiers had enriched themselves to this extent by the failure of Prime Minister. But yet nothing was proved!

That the major had either himself driven in the nail or seen it done, all racing men were agreed. He had been out with the horse in the morning, and had been the first to declare that the animal was lame. And he had been with the horse till the farrier had come. But he had concocted a story for himself. He did not dispute that the horse had been lamed by the machinations of Green and Villiers—with the assistance of the groom. No doubt, he

said, these men, who had been afraid to face an enquiry, had contrived and had carried out the iniquity. How the lameness had been caused he could not pretend to say. The groom who was at the horse's head, and who evidently knew how these things were done, might have struck a nerve in the horse's foot with his boot. But when the horse was got into the stable he, Tifto—so he declared—at once ran out to send for the farrier. During the minutes so occupied the operation must have been made with the nail. That was Tifto's story—and, as he kept his ground, there were some few who believed it.

But though the story was so far good, he had at moments been imprudent, and had talked when he should have been silent. The whole matter had been a torment to him. In the first place his conscience made him miserable. As long as it had been possible to prevent the evil, he had hoped to make a clean breast of it to Lord Silverbridge. Up to this period of his life everything had been "square" with him. He had betted "square," and had ridden "square," and had run horses "square." He had taken a pride in this, as though it had been a great virtue. It was not without great inward grief that he had deprived himself of the consolations of these reflections! But when he had approached his noble partner, his noble partner snubbed him at every turn—and he did the deed.

His reward was to be three thousand pounds—and he got his money. The money was very much to him—would perhaps have been almost enough to comfort him in his misery, had not those other rascals got so much more. When he heard that the groom's fee was higher than his



own, it almost broke his heart. Green and Villiers, men of infinitely lower standing—men at whom the Beargarden would not have looked—had absolutely netted fortunes on which they could live in comfort. No doubt they had run away while Tifto still stood his ground; but he soon began to doubt whether to have run away with twenty thousand pounds was not better than to remain with such small plunder as had fallen to his lot, among such faces as those which now looked upon him! Then when he had drunk a few glasses of whisky-and-water, he said something very foolish as to his power of punishing that swindler Green.

An attempt had been made to induce Silverbridge to delay the payment of his bets—but he had been very eager that they should be paid. Under the joint auspices of Mr. Lupton and Mr. Moreton the horses were sold, and the establishment was annihilated—with considerable loss, but with great despatch. The duke had been urgent. The Jockey Club, and the racing world, and the horsey fraternity generally, might do what seemed to them good—so that Silverbridge was extricated from the matter. Silverbridge was extricated—and the duke cared nothing for the rest.

But Silverbridge could not get out of the mess quite so easily as his father wished. Two questions arose about Major Tifto, outside the racing world, but within the domain of the world of sport and pleasure generally, as to one of which it was impossible that Silverbridge should not express an opinion. The first question had reference to the Mastership of the Runnymede hounds. In this our young friend was not bound to concern himself. The other affected the Beargarden Club; and, as Lord Silverbridge had introduced the major, he could hardly forbear from the expression of an opinion.

There was a meeting of the subscribers to the hunt in the last week of October. At that meeting Major Tifto told his story. There he was, to answer any charge which might be brought against him. If he had made money by losing the race—where was it, and whence had it come? Was it not clear that a conspiracy might have been made without his knowledge—and clear also that the real conspirators had levanted? He had not levanted. The hounds were his own. He had undertaken to hunt the country for this season, and they had undertaken to pay him a certain sum of money. He should expect and

demand that sum of money. If they chose to make any other arrangement for the year following they could do so. Then he sat down and the meeting was adjourned—the secretary having declared that he would not act in that capacity any longer, nor collect the funds. A farmer had also asserted that he and his friends had resolved that Major Tifto should not ride over their fields. On the next day the major had his hounds out, and some of the London men, with a few of the neighbours, joined him. Gates were locked; but the hounds ran, and those who chose to ride managed to follow them. There are men who will stick to their sport, though Apollyon himself should carry the horn. Who cares whether the lady who fills a theatre be or be not a moral young woman, or whether the bandmaster who keeps such excellent time in a ball has or has not paid his debts? There were men of this sort who supported Major Tifto—but then there was a general opinion that the Runnymede hunt would come to an end, unless a new Master could be found.

Then in the first week in November a special meeting was called at the Beargarden, at which Lord Silverbridge was asked to attend. "It is impossible that he should be allowed to remain in the club." This was said to Lord Silverbridge by Mr. Lupton. "Either he must go, or the club must be broken up."

Silverbridge was very unhappy on the occasion. He had at last been reasoned into believing that the horse had been made the victim of foul play; but he persisted in saying that there was no conclusive evidence against Tifto. The matter was argued with him. Tifto had laid bets against the horse; Tifto had been hand and glove with Green; Tifto could not have been absent from the horse above two minutes; the thing could not have been arranged without Tifto. As he had brought Tifto into the club, and had been his partner on the turf, it was his business to look into the matter. "But for all that," said he, "I'm not going to jump on a man when he's down, unless I feel sure that he's guilty."

Then the meeting was held, and Tifto himself appeared. When the accusation was made by Mr. Lupton, who proposed that he should be expelled, he burst into tears. The whole story was repeated—the nail, and the hammer, and the lameness; and the moments were counted up, and poor Tifto's bets and friendship with Green were made apparent—and the case was



submitted to the club. An old gentleman who had been connected with the turf all his life, and who would not have scrupled, by square betting, to rob his dearest friend of his last shilling, seconded the proposition—telling all the story over again. Then Major Tifto was asked whether he wished to say anything.

"I've got to say that I'm here," said Tifto, still crying, "and if I'd done anything of that kind, of course I'd have gone with the rest of 'em. I put it to Lord Silverbridge to say whether I'm that sort of fellow." Then he sat down.

Upon this there was a pause, and the club was manifestly of opinion that Lord Silverbridge ought to say something. "I think that Major Tifto should not have betted against the horse," said Silverbridge.

"I can explain that," said the major. "Let me explain that. Everybody knows that I'm a man of small means. I wanted to 'edge, I only wanted to 'edge."

Mr. Lupton shook his head. "Why have you not shown me your book?"

"I told you before that it was stolen. Green got hold of it. I did win a little. I never said I didn't. But what has that to do with hammering a nail into a horse's foot? I have always been true to you, Lord Silverbridge, and you ought to stick up for me now."

"I will have nothing further to do with the matter," said Silverbridge, "one way or the other;" and he walked out of the room—and out of the club. The affair was ended by a magnanimous declaration on the part of Major Tifto that he would not remain in a club in which he was suspected, and by a consent on the part of the meeting to receive the major's instant resignation.

#### CHAPTER L. THE DUKE'S ARGUMENTS.

THE duke before he left Custins had an interview with Lady Cantrip, at which that lady found herself called upon to speak her mind freely. "I don't think she cares about Lord Poplecourt," Lady Cantrip said.

"I am sure I don't know why she should," said the duke, who was often very aggravating even to his friend.

"But as we had thought——"

"She ought to do as she is told," said the duke, remembering how obedient his Glencora had been. "Has he spoken to her?"

"I think not."

"Then how can we tell?"

"I asked her to see him, but she expressed so much dislike that I could not press it. I am afraid, Duke, that you will find it difficult to deal with her."

"I have found it very difficult!"

"As you have trusted me so much——"

"Yes; I have trusted you, and do trust you. I hope you understand that I appreciate your kindness."

"Perhaps then you will let me say what I think."

"Certainly, Lady Cantrip."

"Mary is a very peculiar girl—with great gifts—but——"

"But what?"

"She is obstinate. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that she has great firmness of character. It is within your power to separate her from Mr. Tregear. It would be foreign to her character to—to—leave you, except with your approbation."

"You mean, she will not run away."

"She will do nothing without your permission. But she will remain unmarried, unless she be allowed to marry Mr. Tregear."

"What do you advise then?"

"That you should yield. As regards money, you could give them what they want. Let him go into public life. You could manage that for him."

"He is Conservative!"

"What does that matter when the question is one of your daughter's happiness? Everybody tells me that he is clever and well conducted."

He betrayed nothing by his face, as this was said to him. But, as he got into the carriage, he was a miserable man. It is very well to tell a man that he should yield, but there is nothing so wretched to a man as yielding. Young people and women have to yield, but for such a man as this, to yield is in itself a misery. In this matter the duke was quite certain of the propriety of his judgment. To yield would be not only to mortify himself, but to do wrong at the same time. He had convinced himself that the Poplecourt arrangement would come to nothing. Nor had he and Lady Cantrip combined been able to exercise over her the sort of power to which Lady Glencora had been subjected. If he persevered—and he still was sure, almost sure, that he would persevere—his object must be achieved after a different fashion. There must be infinite suffering—suffering both to him and to her. Could she have been made to consent to marry someone else, terrible as the rupture might

have been, she would have reconciled herself at last to her new life. So it had been with his Glencora, after a time. Now the misery must go on from day to day beneath his eyes, with the knowledge on his part that he was crushing all joy out of her young life, and the conviction on her part that she was being treated with continued cruelty by her father! It was a terrible prospect! But if it were manifestly his duty to act after this fashion, must he not do his duty?

If he were to find that by persevering in this course he would doom her to death, or perchance to madness—what then? If it were right, he must still do it. He must still do it, if the weakness incident to his human nature did not rob him of the necessary firmness. If every foolish girl were indulged, all restraint would be lost, and there would be an end to those rules as to birth and position by which he thought his world was kept straight. And then, mixed with all this, was his feeling of the young man's arrogance in looking for such a match. Here was a man without a shilling, whose manifest duty it was to go to work so that he might earn his bread, who, instead of doing so, had hoped to raise himself to wealth and position by entrapping the heart of an unwary girl! There was something to the duke's thinking base in this, and much more base because the unwary girl was his own daughter. That such a man as Tregear should make an attack upon him, and select his rank, his wealth, and his child as the stepping-stones by which he intended to rise! What could be so mean as that a man should seek to live by looking out for a wife with money? But what so impudent, so arrogant, so unblushingly disregarding of propriety, as that he should endeavour to select his victim from such a family as that of the Pallisers, and that he should lay his impious hand on the very daughter of the Duke of Omnium?

But together with all this there came upon him moments of ineffable tenderness. He felt as though he longed to take her in his arms and tell her, that if she were unhappy, so would he be unhappy too—to make her understand that a hard necessity had made this sorrow common to them both. He thought that, if she would only allow it, he could speak of her love as a calamity which had befallen them, as from the hand of fate, and not as a fault. If he could make a partnership in misery with her, so that each might believe that

each was acting for the best, then he could endure all that might come. But, as he was well aware, she regarded him as being simply cruel to her. She did not understand that he was performing an imperative duty. She had set her heart upon a certain object, and, having taught herself that in that way happiness might be reached, had no conception that there should be something in the world, some idea of personal dignity, more valuable to her than the fruition of her own desires! And yet every word he spoke to her was affectionate. He knew that she was bruised, and, if it might be possible, he would pour oil into her wounds—even though she would not recognise the hand which relieved her.

They slept one night in town—where they encountered Silverbridge soon after his retreat from the Beargarden. "I cannot quite make up my mind, sir, about that fellow Tifo," he said to his father.

"I hope you have made up your mind that he is no fit companion for yourself."

"That's over. Everybody understands that, sir."

"Is anything more necessary?"

"I don't like feeling that he has been ill-used. They have made him resign the club, and I fancy they won't have him at the hunt."

"He has lost no money by you!"

"Oh no."

"Then I think you may be indifferent. From all that I hear I think he must have won money—which will probably be a consolation to him."

"I think they have been hard upon him," continued Silverbridge. "Of course he is not a good man, nor a gentleman, nor possessed of very high feelings. But a man is not to be sacrificed altogether for that. There are so many men who are not gentlemen, and so many gentlemen who are bad fellows."

"I have no doubt Mr. Lupton knew what he was about," replied the duke.

On the next morning the duke and Lady Mary went down to Matching, and, as they sat together in the carriage after leaving the railway, the father endeavoured to make himself pleasant to his daughter. "I suppose we shall stay at Matching now till Christmas," he said.

"I hope so."

"Whom would you like to have here?"

"I don't want anyone, papa."

"You will be very sad without somebody. Would you like the Finns?"

"If you please, papa. I like her. He never talks anything but politics."

"He is none the worse for that, Mary. I wonder whether Lady Mabel Grex would come."

"Lady Mabel Grex!"

"Do you not like her?"

"Oh, yes, I like her—but what made you think of her, papa?"

"Perhaps Silverbridge would come to us then."

Lady Mary thought that she knew a great deal more about that than her father did. "Is he fond of Lady Mabel, papa?"

"Well—I don't know. There are secrets which should not be told. I think they are very good friends. I would not have her asked unless it would please you."

"I like her very much, papa."

"And perhaps we might get the Boncassens to come to us. I did say a word to him about it." Now, as Mary felt, difficulty was heaping itself upon difficulty. "I have seldom met a man in whose company I could take more pleasure than in that of Mr. Boncassen; and the young lady seems to be worthy of her father." Mary was silent, feeling the complication of the difficulties. "Do you not like her?" asked the duke.

"Very much, indeed," said Mary.

"Then let us fix a day and ask them. If you will come to me after dinner with an almanack we will arrange it. Of course you will invite that Miss Cassewary too?"

The complication seemed to be very bad indeed. In the first place was it not clear that she, Lady Mary, ought not to be a party to asking Miss Boncassen to meet her brother at Matching? Would it not be imperative on her part to tell her father the whole story? And yet how could she do that? It had been told her in confidence, and she remembered what her own feelings had been when Mrs. Finn had suggested the propriety of telling the story which had been told to her! And how would it be possible to ask Lady Mabel to come to Matching to meet Miss Boncassen in the presence of Silverbridge? If the party could be made up without Silverbridge things might run smoothly.

As she was thinking of this in her own room, thinking also how happy she could be if one other name might be added to the list of guests, the duke had gone alone into his library. There a pile of letters reached him, among which he found one marked "Private," and addressed in a hand which he did not recognise. This he

opened suddenly—with a conviction that it would contain a thorn—and, turning over the page, found the signature to it was "Francis Tregear." The man's name was wormwood to him. He at once felt that he would wish to have his dinner, his fragment of a dinner, brought to him in that solitary room, and that he might remain secluded for the rest of the evening. But still he must read the letter; and he read it.

"MY DEAR LORD DUKE,—If my mode of addressing your grace be too familiar, I hope you will excuse it. It seems to me that if I were to use one more distant, I should myself be detracting something from my right to make the claim which I intend to put forward. You know what my feelings are in reference to your daughter. I do not pretend to suppose that they should have the least weight with you. But you know also what *her* feelings are for me. A man seems to be vain when he expresses his conviction of a woman's love for himself. But this matter is so important to her, as well as to me, that I am compelled to lay aside all pretence. If she do not love me as I love her, then the whole thing drops to the ground. Then it will be for me to take myself off from out of your notice—and from hers—and to keep to myself whatever heart-breaking I may have to undergo. But if she be as steadfast in this matter as I am—if her happiness be fixed on marrying me as mine is on marrying her—then, I think, I am entitled to ask you whether you are justified in keeping us apart.

"I know well what are the discrepancies. Speaking from my own feeling I regard very little those of rank. I believe myself to be as good a gentleman as though my father's forefathers had sat for centuries past in the House of Lords. I believe that you would have thought so also, had you and I been brought in contact on any other subject. The discrepancy in regard to money is, I own, a great trouble to me. Having no wealth of my own, I wish that your daughter were so circumstanced that I could go out into the world and earn bread for her. I know myself so well that I dare say positively that her money—if it be that she will have money—had no attractions for me when I first became acquainted with her, and adds nothing now to the persistency with which I claim her hand.

"But I venture to ask whether you can dare to keep us apart if her happiness

depends on her love for me? It is now more than six months since I called upon you in London and explained my wishes. You will understand me when I say that I cannot be contented to sit idle, trusting simply to the assurance which I have of her affection. Did I doubt it, my way would be more clear. I should feel in that case that she would yield to your wishes, and I should then, as I have said before, just take myself out of the way. But if it be not so, then I am bound to do something—on her behalf as well as my own. What am I to do? Any endeavour to meet her clandestinely is against my instincts, and would certainly be rejected by her. A secret correspondence would be equally distasteful to both of us. Whatever I do in this matter, I wish you to know that I do it. Yours always most faithfully, and with the greatest respect,

"FRANCIS TREGEAR."

He read the letter very carefully, and at first was simply astonished by what he considered to be the unparalleled arrogance of the young man. In regard to rank this young gentleman thought himself to be as good as anybody else! In regard to money he did acknowledge some inferiority. But that was a misfortune, and could not be helped! Not only was the letter arrogant; but the fact that he should dare to write any letter on such a subject was proof of most unpardonable arrogance. The duke walked about the room thinking of it till he was almost in a passion. Then he read the letter again, and was gradually prevailed by a feeling of its manliness. Its arrogance remained, but with its arrogance there was a certain boldness which induced respect. Whether I am such a son-in-law as you would like or not, it is your duty to accept me, if, by refusing to do so, you will render your daughter miserable. That was Mr. Tregear's argument. He himself might be prepared to argue in answer that it was his duty to reject such a son-in-law, even though by rejecting him he might make his daughter miserable. He was not shaken; but with his condemnation of the young man there was mingled something of respect.

He continued to digest the letter before the hour of dinner, and when the almanack was brought to him he fixed on certain days. The Boncassens, he knew, would be free from engagements in ten days' time. As to Lady Mabel, he seemed to think it almost certain that she would come. "I believe she is always going about from one

house to another at this time of the year," said Mary.

"I think she will come to us if it be possible," said the duke. "And you must write to Silverbridge."

"And what about Mr. and Mrs. Finn?"

"She promised she would come again, you know. They are at their own place in Surrey. They will come, unless they have friends with them. They have no shooting, and nothing brings people together now except shooting. I suppose there are things here to be shot. And be sure you write to Silverbridge."

### WOLVES.

"THERE is nothing good in the wolf," says Buffon; "he has a base look, a savage aspect, a terrible voice, an insupportable smell, a nature brutal and ferocious, and a body so foul and unclean that no animal or reptile will touch his flesh. It is only a wolf that can eat a wolf." "No animal," writes Cuvier, "so richly merits destruction as the wolf." The wolf, however, vile as he is in life, is not altogether worthless in death. His skin supplies the peasantry of the land over which he prowls with clothing, the wealthy with carriage-rugs, and ladies with tippets. The skin of the wolf is strong and durable; the woodmen and mountaineers make cloaks and caps of it, the tail being left on the latter to fall over the ear by way of ornament. They likewise cover with it the outside of their game-bags. They tan it also; and excellent shoes are made of the leather, soft and light for summer wear. It is likewise made into parchment to cover small drums used on festive occasions, and by their noise to assist in the chase of the wolves themselves.

Wolves attain their full size in three years, and live from fifteen to twenty. Their hair, like that of man, grows grey with years, and, like him also, they lose their teeth, but without the advantage of being able to replace them. The race of wolves is older than the flood, for their bones have been found in antediluvian remains. They are met with in all countries, on the New Continent as well as the Old. "They exist," observes Cuvier, "in Asia, Africa, and America, as well as in Europe; from Egypt to Lapland; everywhere, in fact, excepting in England." How an animal so universally hated should have continued to perpetuate itself, when every other savage beast on



the face of the earth diminishes in an infinitely greater proportion, is a problem difficult to solve.

The wolf varies in shape and colour, according to the country in which it lives. In Asia, towards Turkey, this animal is reddish, in Italy quite red. In India the one called beriah is described as being of a light cinnamon colour. Yellow wolves, with a short black mane along the entire spine, are found in the marshes of all the hot and temperate regions of America. The fur of the Mexican wolf is one of the richest and most valuable known. In the regions of the north the wolf is black, and sometimes black and grey. Others are white. But the black wolf is always the fiercest. The black is also found in the south of Europe, and particularly in the Pyrenees. Colonel Hamilton Smith relates an anecdote of its great size and weight. At a battue in the mountains near Madrid, one of these wolves, which came bounding through the high grass towards an English gentleman who was present, was so large that he mistook it for a donkey, but discovered his error in time to stop the brute's further advance with a bullet.

Colonel Smith adds that the French wolves are generally browner and somewhat stronger than those of Germany, with an appearance far more wild and savage. The Russian are larger, and appear more bulky and formidable, from the great quantity of long coarse hair that covers them on the neck and cheeks. The Swedish and Norwegian are similar to the Russian, but appear deeper and heavier in the shoulder. They are also lighter in colour, and in winter become completely white. The Alpine wolves are yellowish, and smaller than the French. This is the type of wolf that is commonly found in the western countries of Europe; and it was, in all probability, this species that once infested the wild and extensively-wooded land districts of the British Islands. For that wolves were once exceedingly numerous in England is as certain as that the bear formerly prowled in Wales and Scotland; Athelstan in 925 erecting on the public highways refuges against their attacks. A retreat was built at Flixton, in Yorkshire, to protect travellers against these ravenous brutes. King John, quoted by Pennant from Bishop Littleton's collection, mentions the wolf as one of the beasts of the chase which, despite the severe forest laws of the feudal system, the Devonshire men were permitted to kill.

Even in the reign of the first Edward they were so numerous that he applied himself in earnest to their extirpation; and, enlisting criminals into the service, commuted their punishment for a given number of wolves' tongues. He also permitted the Welsh to redeem the tax imposed upon them by an annual tribute of three hundred of these horrible animals. In the following reign certain tenants in Derbyshire held their lands on condition that they should hunt the wolves that harboured in that county. The flocks of Scotland suffered greatly from the ravages of wolves in 1577, and they were not finally rooted out of that portion of the island till about the year 1686.

Wolves were seen in Ireland as late as 1710. The Saxon name for the month of January, "wolf-moneth," in which dreary season the famished beasts became more desperate, and the term for an outlaw, "Wolfshead," implying that he might be killed with as much impunity as a wolf, indicate how numerous wolves were in those times.

In the sombre forests of Nivernais and Burgundy, where wolves are still numerous, they prey upon everything carnal when driven by hunger; not only cows, oxen, horses, sheep, goats, and pigs, but also fowls, turkeys, geese, and ducks; and even the wayfarer and the innocent babe, left for a moment unattended, supply their larder. Quantities of game, fawns, and roebucks, and even the wild boar himself, when young, adds to the variety of their diet, for the wolf cannot do without flesh, and has a profound contempt for a vegetable regimen. Geese and ducks have especial attractions for the wolfish appetite, but this inclination often tends to the animal's destruction, as if one of these birds be tied alive to the branch of a tree, it will by its cries infallibly bring any wolves within hearing to the spot, where they are met by the guns of the peasantry concealed in properly constructed huts. Rewards are offered for the heads of male wolves, and yet greater sums for those of females; the destroyer being likewise loaded with presents by the peasantry.

Nor are wolves, while in the possession of every brutal vice, free from that of intoxication. Henri de Criquele, in a French work upon the Natural History of Le Morvan (a district of France), tells us that "in the summer the wolves, like the gipsies, have no fixed residence. They may



then be met with in the standing barley or oats, the vineyards and fields; they sleep in the open country, and seldom seek the friendly shelter of the forest, except during the scorching hours of the day. Towards the end of August I have often met them," says he, "in the vineyards, apparently half-drunk, scarcely able to walk—in short, quite unsteady on their legs, almost ploughing the ground up with their noses, and staring stupidly about them. I once came upon one partly hidden amidst the thick undergrowth and weeds on the edge of the piles of stones collected from amongst the vines. My presence aroused his growl; when rising lazily amongst the bushes he stumbled and fell, being evidently incapable of getting farther. A salute from both barrels with small shot scarcely tickled his skin, but it brought him once more on his legs, though only to fall again; when having reloaded, I advanced on him, and administered a double dose in his ear, which had the desired effect. The fact was he was quite drunk, although not disorderly." This inclination in wolves for intemperate indulgence in the juice of the grape is vouched for by several authorities. It would appear that the wolves during the ardent heats of August suffer greatly from thirst, and in the absence of water take to the vineyards, and there endeavour to assuage it by eating large quantities of grapes—very cool, and, no doubt, very delightful at the time, but the treacherous liquid ferments, bacchanalian fumes soon infect the brain, and for several hours these four-legged toppers are literally "as drunk as beasts," and entirely deprived of their senses.

The favourite trap employed for wolves is the *traquerard*. This is most dangerous even to man; the strongest that is made requiring two men to set it. It has springs of formidable power and delicacy, and when these are touched, the jaws of the trap, armed with rows of teeth, shut one within the other. Great care must be taken by those who set these traps that their hands are clothed in gloves, or otherwise the wolf, always extremely difficult to deceive by reason of his delicate sense of smell, would be at once on the alert. The trap has also a set of triangular grapnels to further secure its prey should it make strenuous attempts to escape, which the wolves sometimes do, either gnawing off their own leg, or their companions performing this

office for them. To the trap is attached about six feet of iron chain fastened to a tree, and the whole is carefully covered with leaves, briars, &c. The body of an animal that has been dead a few days is divided into five parts; one of the portions is suspended to the lower branch of a tree exactly over the trap, and the other four portions, attached to a withe or the band of a faggot, are trailed by men on horseback on the ground at right-angles from the trap. As a caution to the peasantry small pieces of wood and stones are suspended by string in the vicinity of the trap to intimate the lurking danger to man.

In spite of every precaution, however, very sad occurrences will often happen in these forests. Some years ago, as related by Chevalier de Criqueulle, a trap was placed near a deserted footway, and the usual warning precautions taken. The same day a young man, full of love and imprudence—upon the eve, in fact, of being entangled in the conjugal "I will"—anxious to present to his fiancée some turtle-doves and pigeons with rosy beaks, with whose whereabouts he was acquainted, left his home a little before sunset to surprise the birds on their nest. He was late. The night closed in rapidly, and with the intention of shortening the road, he took his way across the forest. Without in the least heeding the brambles and bushes which caught his legs, or the ditches and streams he was obliged to cross, he pressed on, and after a continued battle with the thorns, the stumps, and roots, and the long clinging tendrils of the wild roses, came exactly on the track where the trap was set.

The night was now nearly dark, and thinking only of his doves and the loved one, he failed to observe that several little pieces of string were swinging to and fro in the breeze from the branches of the thicket near him. Dreadful, indeed, was it for him that he did not, for suddenly he felt a terrible shock, accompanied by most intense pain, the bones of his leg being apparently crushed to splinters. He was caught in the wolf-trap!

The first few moments of pain and suffering over, he must have comprehended the danger of his position, and had, it is presumed, with great presence of mind endeavoured to open the serrated iron jaws which held him fast. But though danger is said to double the strength of a man, the trap refused to give up its prey, and as at each movement of his body the iron

teeth buried themselves deeper and deeper in his flesh his agony must have been of the most exquisite description. He probably shouted, and would have continued to shout, however hopelessly, for help, had it not been for the fear of attracting the wolves that might be lurking in the neighbourhood. He had under his coat a small hatchet; and with this, in the event of his being attacked by the dreaded animals, he trusted to defend himself. As the night lengthened the moon rose and shed her pale light over the forest. He may now be pictured immovable, with eyes and ears on the qui vive, his body in the most excruciating torment, listening and waiting. All at once far, very far off, he hears a confused murmur of indistinct sounds. Approaching with rapidity, these murmurs become cries and yells. They are those of wolves on the track—hellish demons, which ere a few minutes would be upon him, carried direct to the spot by the trails set for the destruction of his destroyers. Fear not being part of his hardy nature, he by almost superhuman efforts, and in the awful moment forgetting all pain, contrived to drag himself and the trap towards an oak tree, against which he placed his back.

Here, with his hatchet ready to strike, the young fellow, full of courage, doubtless offered up a short prayer to his God, and embracing, as it were, in his mind his poor old mother and his bride, awaited the horrible result, determined to show himself a true child of the forest, and meet his fate like a man. A few minutes more and he was surrounded by a cordon of yellow flames from the eyes of the brutes; the animals themselves, which he could scarcely distinguish, sending forth their horrible yells full in his face, and their horrible smell being borne to him on the wind.

On the following morning, when the unfortunate forester who set the trap came to examine it he found it at the foot of the oak, deluged with blood, the bone of a human leg upright between the iron teeth, and all around, scattered about the turf and the path, a quantity of human remains—bits of hair, bones, red and moist as if the flesh had been but recently torn from them. Shreds of a coat and other articles of clothing were also discovered near the spot. With the assistance of some dogs, which were put on the scent, three wolves, their heads and bodies

cut open with a hatchet, were found dying in the adjacent thicket.

When the venerable curé of the village, after previously endeavouring in every possible way by Christian exhortation to prepare his aged mother to hear the sad tale, informed her that these remains of humanity were all that was left of her boy, she laughed. Alas! it was the laugh of madness; reason had fled. "Many a time," says Monsieur Criquele, "I have met the aged creature strolling in a glade of the forest, or seated basking in the sun outside the door of her cottage. She was always laughing and singing, always rocking in her arms a log of wood, a hank of hemp, a bundle of fern—objects which to her poor crazy eyes represented her child—her child as he was in his tender years. She called it by name, she kissed, and embraced, and dandled it, rocked it on her knee, and sung those lullabys which had soothed the slumbers of him who was now no more. And," adds the tender-hearted old warrior, "I have witnessed the horrors of war, I have heard many a strange story, but never has my soul been more touched with feelings of profound grief than the day I first met this poor creature, this widowed mother, then seventy years of age, singing and walking in the forest, carrying and dandling in her shrivelled arms a shawl rolled up, kissing and talking to the silent bundle, smiling on it, and opening that bosom in which the springs of life had for years been dried, to nourish once more what seemed to her still to be her baby boy."

The tree at which this tragedy occurred in the forest of Le Morvan was still standing in 1875, and is called by the peasants *The Widow's Oak*, or *The Oak of the Wolves*.

As a pendant to the above we give the following from the archives of the forest of La Madeleine. This district, full of ravines, dark thickets, small hamlets, and solitary houses, was, if it be not still, overrun with these insatiable and remorseless brutes. Travellers had been devoured in the passes of La Goulotte, and mangled and torn in the ravines of Lingou. No one dared venture into the country when night approached. A farm yet stands on the borders of the forest, in the midst of pastures and patches of furze, full of cattle and sheep, and this by the time the stars were brilliantly illuminating the dark arch of heaven, was frequently surrounded by troops of wolves, scratching

under the walls, and loudly demanding the trifling alms of a horse, an ox, or a man. It so happened that one of the farmer's colts died, and he determined, if possible, to use it as a bait, which would provide him the opportunity of destroying some of his nocturnal visitors. For this purpose he placed the dead body in the middle of the courtyard, and having fastened weights to its neck and legs to prevent the wolves from dragging it away, he set the principal gate open, but so arranged with cords and pulleys that it could be closed at any moment. Night came on. The house was shut up, the candles extinguished, the stables barricaded, the dogs brought indoors and muzzled to prevent them from barking, and in the bright starlight, on some clean straw the better to attract attention, lay the dead body of the colt; the gate, as stated, being open. All was ready, all within on the watch, when about ten o'clock the wolves were heard in the distance. They approached, smelt, looked, listened, growled, and, distrusting the open gate, paused. Not one would enter. Profound was the silence and excitement in the house. Hunger at length overcame prudence and mistrust. Their savage cries were renewed. They became more and more impatient and exasperated; how was it possible to resist a piece of young horseflesh? The most forward could hold out no longer. He advanced alone, went up to the colt, tore away a large piece of his chest, and set off at speed with his booty between his teeth. The other wolves, seeing him escape in safety, regained their confidence, and one, two, three, six, eight wolves were soon gathered round the animal, but, though eating as fast as they could, they remained with ears erect, and each eye still on the gate.

Eight wolves! The farmer thought it a respectable number, and whistled, when the four men at the ropes hauling instantly, the large folding-gates rolled to, and closed in the stillness with the noise of thunder. The wolves were prisoners. Startled and terrified at finding themselves caught, they at once deserted the small remains of the colt, creeping about in all directions in search of some outlet by which they might escape, or some hole to hide in, while the farmer, having secured them, sent his household to bed, putting off the destruction of the wolves until sunrise.

The morning dawned, and with the first

rays of light master and men set some ladders against the outer walls of the court, and from them, as well as the windows, fired volleys on the entrapped wolves. Unable to resist, the animals for some time hurried hither and thither, crouching in every corner and nook of the yard. But the wounds from balls which reached them soon turned their fear into rage. They began to make alarming leaps, and uttered the most hideous yells. The work of destruction went on but slowly. The men were but indifferent shots. The wolves were never an instant at rest; and the persistence and rapidity with which they continued to gallop round or leap from side to side of the yard, as if in a cage, effectually baffled the endeavours of their enemies. The affair was in this way becoming tedious, when an unlooked-for misfortune threw a dreadful gloom over the whole scene.

The ladder used by one of the party being too short, the young man placed himself on the wall, as if in a saddle, to have a better opportunity of taking aim, when one of the wolves, the largest, strongest, and most exasperated, suddenly bounded at the wall, as if to clear it, but failed. Subsequently the animal attempted to climb up by means of the unhewn stones, like a cat, and though he again failed, he reached high enough almost to seize with his sharp teeth the foot of the unfortunate lad. Terrified at this, he raised his leg to avoid the brute, lost his balance, and fell with a heart-rending scream into the court below. Each and all the wolves turned like lightning on their helpless, hopeless victim, and a cry of horror was heard on every side.

The storm of leaden hail ceased. No man dared fire again, and yet something must be done, for the monsters were devouring the wretched lad. Listening only to the dictates of courage and humanity, the noble-hearted farmer, gun in hand, leaped at once into the yard, and the men all followed his heroic example. A general and frightful conflict ensued. The scene that then took place defies every attempt at description. No pen could adequately place before the reader the awful incidents that succeeded. He must, if he can, imagine the howling of the wolves, the piteous cries of the lacerated and dying youth, the imprecations of the men, the neighing of the horses, the roaring of the bulls in their stalls, and, more than all, the crying and

lamentations of the women and children in the house—a fearful heartrending chorus. At last the farmer's wife, a powerful and resolute woman, with great presence of mind unmuzzled the dogs, and dropped them from an open window into the yard. This most useful reinforcement with their vigorous attacks and loud barking completed the tumult and the tragedy. In twenty minutes the eight wolves were dead, and with them half the faithful dogs. The poor unfortunate lad, his throat torn open, was dead. His courageous though unsuccessful defenders were more or less wounded, and the gallant farmer's left hand so injured, that as soon as surgical aid could be procured for him, amputation was found to be necessary. A fearful price had been paid for the bodies of the eight dead wolves.

#### THE WHITE FLOWER'S STORY.

A SWEET pure flower, white as the snow without,  
I grew and blossomed in the scented air,  
And dreamed full many a dream of life and love.  
I heard young lovers whispering all about,  
And thought that soon I too should have my share.  
The sunshine wooed me gazing from above,  
'Twas then I opened out my perfect flower,  
Until the whole place owned its wondrous power.  
With soft sad eyes, I watched my lady come,  
And as she drew me towards her heaving breast  
I deemed my time drew nigh to see the world,  
That world, of which I heard the voiceless hum  
Go on for e'er, with curious vague unrest;  
And wider yet my pure white leaves unfurled.  
"My lady wears me at the ball to-night  
I once shall see a scene of rare delight!"  
With shaking hand, my lady cut the stem,  
And pressed me to her lips, and in her eyes  
I saw the large tears slowly gathering there;  
Yet did not fall. She did not notice them,  
And looked through mist beyond the pale blue skies  
As if she saw a mystic vision fair.  
"My lady gives me," said I, whispering low,  
"To him to whom her sweet heart longs to go."  
Slowly she carried me with flagging feet  
Into another room. There, on the bed,  
Lay something white and wonderful and grand,  
Upon the lips a lingering smile, so sweet  
I knew that I was with the blessed dead,  
Whose work was done, who could no longer stand  
With weary eyes, watching the daylight die  
Too swift away across the winter sky.  
My lady placed me on th'unbeating heart,  
By the crossed hands, and sighed with bitter pain,  
And yet methought she envied me my place.  
She turned away, then, as if forced apart,  
Her lips just breathed her lover's name again;  
Yet came no sign upon that silent face.  
'Twas then I knew it all—death is life's best,  
And he wins most, who earliest goes to rest.

#### A WEDDING NEMESIS.

I HAVE no desire to be hard on Smith. It is not in my nature to be hard on anybody, and Smith, of all men, has a lasting claim on my indulgence. But really Smith

was one of the most consummate block-heads it has ever been my lot to know. Not because his name was Smith do I consider that he was one of the greatest fools of my acquaintance. Certainly not; I hope I am above that sort of prejudice, although I must confess to an intense dislike to the name of Robinson, and an absolute hatred of Jones. White I consider insipid, and Black is actually diabolical. But there is something in Smith which has always had for me a peculiar charm—a charm which even a long acquaintance with that idiotic fellow has not been able to destroy. What it is I know not; but I mention this only incidentally. By the way, my name is Smith.

Bill Smith was his name. Now William, of all the names in our personal nomenclature, I consider one of the sweetest, most suggestive, and engaging. It is a trifle common, perhaps, but that only goes to prove the soundness of my opinion. Peter is a detestable name; but how many Peters are there? John and James are common enough in all conscience: but both, it will not be denied, are intensely vulgar. It is not because my name is William—although that is my name—that I have such a particular predilection for it. Thank goodness, I have a mind above bias in these matters! But most of us have fancies for which there is no accounting, and my particular fancy is that there are few names, if any, to equal that of William Smith.

But Bill Smith! How any sane individual with the slightest trace of æsthetic breeding can so far forget his own self-respect (to go no further) as to convert William into Bill, and call himself, or allow others to call him, by it, is beyond my comprehension. But that only goes to prove the soundness of my assertion that Bill Smith was an unmitigated ass.

He was a conceited little fool. His height in boots was barely five feet three. My height is just over five feet one; but then I am neatly built, and am considered, as I know to be the case, very imposing in figure. Whereas there was a looseness about Smith's construction (which exactly tallied with his habits), and an inelegance about his general appearance, together with a vulgar familiarity in his manner, which indelibly stamped him as a fellow of low breeding. He had a peculiar knack of making friends; indeed, his circle of acquaintance was out of all proportion to his merits. How he managed it I never could make out, but he always moved in



good society; and the number of girls that courted his company was truly wonderful—a sufficient proof of the correctness of my assertion regarding his loose habits.

My habits were always unimpeachable, though I say it. I never loved but two females in my life. It was through no fault of mine that I did love two.

I admit a personal responsibility for one, the other was thrust upon me by fate. I never think of the Nemesis which visited me at the most critical period of my existence without a cold shudder. Not that fate was unfriendly to me in this instance; thank Heaven! it turned out quite the reverse. But the consequences which might have followed the strange fatality are almost too awful for contemplation.

Bill Smith—I shall style him Bill Smith to distinguish him from myself, William Smith—was a clerk in a barrister's office in the Temple. Even the fact that Smith was a law clerk does not prejudice me against the profession, which I consider a most gentlemanly calling. I myself was a clerk in a barrister's office in the Temple. In point of fact, Bill Smith and I were engaged together in the same office. I was engaged some time before Smith, and consequently looked upon him as my junior, although he would never exhibit manliness enough to admit it. Certainly he drew a larger salary than I did, which he managed through worming himself into the good graces of the governor, who looked upon him as a prodigy, and as indispensable to the concern. I knew that Bill Smith was a mere dolt, with just enough veneer to hide his imperfections, and that was enough for me.

One morning, as I was engaged copying drafts, Smith, who sat in the governor's room, and had been scribbling away at something his vanity considered important, popped his head in at the door, and asked if I could spare him a few minutes, as he had an important communication to make me. "It's awfully important, old boy," he said, sitting on the table, and bending over me with offensive familiarity; "it's a regular joke. I hope you'll like it."

I had experienced at different times several of Bill Smith's jokes, and my general impression was that I did not like them. I was eager, however, to know the latest production of his brain, such as it was, and asked him to explain.

"Take care you don't tumble off the seat, old fellow, when I tell you. I'm going to be married."

It was not easy to conceal my astonishment, but I did it in a manner which must have led Bill Smith to suspect whether I did not know as much of the matter as he did.

It was just an example of Bill Smith's meanness that he had been engaged for eighteen months without giving me the slightest wind of his secret. It is true that I had been pledged in marriage for a period of something like two years without informing Bill Smith of the fact; but then the circumstances of my case were quite exceptional, and Bill Smith wasn't the sort of fellow I should care to entrust with my particular confidences. As he was bound, however, to know of my intentions sooner or later, and as he had given me a good opportunity of breaking the news, I thereupon informed him of my betrothed condition.

In the matter of creating astonishment I had considerably the best of it. Bill Smith was vulgar in most things; he was inconceivably vulgar in his emotions; and the degree of surprise he exhibited, when made aware of my circumstances, was positively shocking. But greater surprise was in store for both of us, and a strong suspicion that Bill Smith had succeeded in his joke pretty well, crossed me when he informed me that the name of the lady of his choice was Miss Lavinia Brown.

One word in parenthesis. I have already expressed my loathing for such names as Robinson, Jones, White, and Black. That I may not be unjustly accused of cynicism in the matter of names, I would here state that Brown is a name for which I have a particular fondness. It is pleasant and expressive, and in my estimation, next to Smith, perhaps the finest of our surnames.

Lavinia Brown was the name of Bill Smith's choice.

Lavinia Brown was the name of my choice.

I soon got rid of any fears that I was the subject of Bill Smith's joke; and his amazement when I told him of the strange coincidence was unbounded.

The Miss Lavinia Browns were not in any way related, that was certain. It was equally certain that they were unacquainted with each other. Bill Smith's Miss Brown was the daughter of a deceased East India merchant, who had left her almost sufficient money to start a private bank with, by way of indemnification for the want of any relations, which commodity he had not been able to procure for her. She had no



relations whatever, except an old bed-ridden aunt with whom she lived, and with whom Bill Smith was an especial favourite, a fact which accounted for the intimacy between the young people.

My Miss Brown was the daughter of a merchant, a general merchant, in the East—that is, the East of London. Mr. Brown was a short, stumpy man, with a large head and ideas in proportion; and his favourite and grandest idea was to see Lavinia well married. A baronet would have honoured himself, in Mr. Brown's opinion, by securing Lavinia for his wife. What might have happened had Miss Lavinia Brown crossed a baronet's path it is idle to conjecture. As it was, she and I—we first met at the house of a mutual friend;—fell violently in love at first sight, and nursed our affection by strictly clandestine meetings; for I was aware of Mr. Brown's rooted antipathy to barristers' clerks, and was unwilling to cause him trouble in anticipation. In appearance Lavinia did not take after her father, for she was a most handsome girl, and had no end of admirers, of all of whom Mr. Brown was terribly jealous. I had more love for Lavinia than I ever before imagined I possessed, and she was most attached to me. How to conciliate Mr. Brown was the question which often troubled us, and no amount of reasoning on the subject ever brought the faintest consolation.

All this I told to Bill Smith, who listened to the story with much interest, and afterwards commiserated me on the difficulties of my courtship.

"Take my advice, old boy," said he; "go to old Brown, and explain everything to him. He can't refuse you his daughter. If he does, just let me know, and I'll put you up to a plan of getting rid of his objections."

It was all very well for Bill Smith to talk of going to old Brown, as if it were only taking a stroll to see the Monument. I had heard enough of old Brown to know that the Monument was not more deaf to reason than he when the subject of argument was his daughter.

As it was absolutely necessary, however, that overtures should be made to Mr. Brown, and as the delay was causing me no inconsiderable anxiety, I determined to adopt Bill Smith's suggestion (taking care to let him know that it was exactly what I had thought of doing), and to see old Brown.

I have already protested against any

desire on my part to vilify Smith. I can afford to dispense with that. But I never reflect on that visit to old Brown, to solicit the hand of his daughter, without secretly anathematising Bill Smith, who prompted me to adopt that course of action.

My visit to Mr. Brown was of short duration, and I left the house precipitately. However much I adored his daughter, I am bound to confess that my opinion of Brown personally was very poor. His mode of argument was vulgar in the extreme. I shall not revert to it.

My interview with Brown having failed in its object, I betook myself to Bill Smith, as in that contingency arranged.

"Well, my boy," said he, when I had given him a full account of my visit to Brown, "there's only one course open to you now. You'll have to elope with the girl. If she is as attached to you as you say, where's the difficulty? Once get married, and the thing's past undoing. Old Brown will have to make the best of it, and he'll bless you both, and you'll all live happily together whenever the honeymoon is over."

I told Bill Smith that his idea had exactly coincided with my own (although I had really never dreamt of such a suggestion), and that if he considered there was not too much risk in the proceeding, I was quite prepared to figure in a clandestine marriage ceremony, provided, of course, the lady had no objection.

"I've got an excellent idea," said Smith, when he had sufficiently applauded my courage and determination to baulk old Brown and secure his daughter. "Our marriage will be celebrated in about six weeks' time. It will be as private as it is possible to imagine, for Lavinia has taken it into her head to have the ceremony perfectly private, and she objects to have even a bridesmaid. I had marked you out for my groomsman, but we can easily dispense with that formality. Now, what I propose is this: that we get married together—two knots in one operation. I've selected a nice little church a few miles out of town; an old silver-headed parson to officiate; an antiquated one-legged sexton, and the pew-opener, his wife, to witness the proceedings; and what more do you want?"

Nothing could be better. All that was wanted now was Lavinia's consent and a special license. The consent I obtained at our first interview, after I had assured Lavinia that there was no alternative to

running away but the separation of two fond hearts. The license was readily procurable.

How slowly the weeks passed by! Even the occupation of hunting after eligible furnished lodgings, and the many other duties incidental to an approaching marriage, did not hasten the time to my satisfaction. But the day arrived at last. What a flutter of excitement I was in, and how glad I was when I alighted with Lavinia at the little railway-station where we were to meet Bill Smith and his bride, to find that old Brown was not yet on our track; and that even should he arrive by the next train, we should be united beyond his powers of separation!

Bill Smith was awaiting us with his Miss Lavinia Brown. How plain she looked beside my Lavinia! I thought her positively ugly; but I was aware of Smith's taste in these matters, and moreover had some doubt about the union being entirely a love affair; and was, therefore, not astonished. Nor was I agreeably struck with her manner, which appeared to me unwarrantably retiring and exclusive. The two girls, however, understood each other at once, and were very soon good friends. By comparison I loved my Lavinia more than ever. Never was man more in love than I as we walked up to the little church, the two Lavinias, linked together, some distance in front, and Bill Smith and I bringing up the rear. Had old Brown appeared on the scene then, and attempted to frustrate our designs, I believe there would have been more immediate necessity for a magistrate than a clergyman.

I assured Bill Smith that my Lavinia was the darling of my affections, the very *sine quâ non* of my existence. Smith, to all appearances, was vastly enamoured of his Lavinia. He assured me that she was the very idol of his heart, the sole object of his happiness, and that life without her would be a miserable blank.

We soon arrived at the little church, where the old clergyman, the one-legged sexton, and the sedate pew-opener awaited us.

It was all Bill Smith's fault. I leave it to any unprejudiced individual to say whether, under the circumstances, Smith was justified in escorting my bride into the vestry, and leaving me to take in his. How were the sexton and the pew-opener to know that the lady whom Smith led so graciously into church was my Miss

Brown, and that the lady who claimed my courtesy belonged to Smith? Anybody with an ordinary amount of common-sense might have foretold the consequences of such recklessness. But Smith was always such a confounded fool! It fortunately happened that, as he deserved to be, he was the greatest sufferer by the accident; but it might easily have been the other way, so no thanks to Smith.

After the usual preliminaries in the vestry, we all followed the clergyman to the altar. Smith was visibly agitated, as were both the ladies. The fear that old Brown might possibly drop in and disturb the ceremony was sufficient justification for gentle excitement in my case. Therefore, that there might be no hitch in the proceedings, and consequent delay, I took the precaution, as we were leaving the vestry, to whisper into the old pew-opener's ear a request that she would arrange us all after the orthodox fashion at the altar with as much expedition as possible, jog our memories where defective in the marriage service, and generally prompt us during the ceremony; all of which services, in anticipation of certain substantial considerations, she promised most willingly to perform.

Just then an incident occurred, so startlingly suggestive of disastrous consequences as to entirely deprive me of all presence of mind during the ceremony. We had just arrived at the top of the church when the door at the bottom, by which we had entered, closed with a loud bang. My knees knocked against each other, and I was staring straight up at the little stained window in front in dreadful suspense, when I felt a hand on my arm. I turned round in a cold perspiration, and had scarcely time to thank goodness that it was only the old pew-opener "adjusting" me, when the clergyman began. The banging of the door fortunately turned out to be nothing worse than the effect of a sharp gust of wind, and in itself was a matter of slight consequence; but I shall always believe that that incident, happening as it did in conjunction with all the circumstances of our peculiar position, was materially responsible for the subsequent history of all of us. But for that I should have been in a state of, at least, comparative coolness, and capable of guarding my own interests. As it was, the shock so affected me that I was positively powerless to prevent the sequel.

I was staring up at the window when

the clergyman commenced the service, and I think I stared up at it nearly throughout. How long the ceremony seemed! and how dreary and monotonous! The ladies whispered so lightly that I could scarcely detect a word, and half doubted that we were taking too much for granted. Smith was almost too agitated to speak, and the shock my nerves had just sustained, together with the increasing fear of old Brown's arrival, prevented me from responding as I could have desired. I was heartily glad when we got to the end of the Lavinias and the Williams, and gave a great sigh of relief when it was all over.

We were married now, and not all the Browns in existence could unmarry us. Alas, that we should have been so firmly united! For just as we were leaving the altar, my wife's arm in mine, I heard a scream. I turned round quickly to Lavinia, when— Good Heaven! was I dreaming or mad? I turned to Smith. He was ghastly pale, and his partner had fainted. Horrible Nemesis! I saw it all in a glance.

I had married Bill Smith's Lavinia Brown, and Bill Smith had married mine!

The scene which immediately followed upon the discovery that we had got mixed, and that four hopes were blasted in one operation, I shall not attempt to describe. It was beyond all description. Words cannot express emotions, at least not such as possessed us then, and everything else was swallowed up in emotion. Through it all I can just remember how we managed to drag the ladies into the vestry quite insensible; how, after a terribly long suspense, they both recovered, to go right off again on recognising their situation; how, when we had all settled down a little, the old pew-opener freely accepted the responsibility of the mistake in adjusting us, but justified her selection on the ground that we had entered the church paired as she had arranged us for the ceremony, and that (as was the fact) she had nothing else to guide her. And how the old clergyman, after commiserating us on the mishap, which could not have happened but for the strange coincidence of the names, which permitted us to conform strictly to the letter of the marriage law, while at the same time violating the spirit of it, thought that the situation was not nearly so bad as at first sight it appeared. For, after all, there was no greater alteration in the ladies' names than there would have been had no mistake happened. Each of them had anticipated being Mrs. William Smith.

Each of them was Mrs. William Smith. As far as appearances went, he was sure we would arrange in handsome couples in any possible combination. He was willing to admit that there might be something beyond mere name and appearance to be considered; but, as we were now united beyond all human separation, he was of opinion that all the other differences might be adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties. There was no remedy for it; and so, a most forlorn, woe-begone quartette, we started back to town. Here was I saddled with a woman of whom I knew absolutely nothing, an acquaintance of an hour's standing, while the girl I loved to distraction was linked to a man whom I held in the utmost contempt, and whom I had hoped to crow over on the matter of a well-assorted marriage. Truly the position was most galling.

Certainly the knowledge that my wife, whom I accepted under protest, possessed a considerable fortune, was not without its soothing effect; while the assurance that I had at least got rid of old Brown was positively pleasurable. On such calm reflection as I could give to the subject I came to the conclusion that I had decidedly the best of this strange misadventure; and by the time we had got to town a settled conviction possessed me that it was wrong to defy Fate, and that it was only Christianlike to accept the inevitable.

The sight of old Brown on the platform, as we alighted, decided me to accept my position without a murmur. The scene between old Brown and Bill Smith, whom I left to settle his own affairs, was more amusing than edifying, and needs no mention here. Suffice it to say that old Brown swore there and then that he would instantly disinherit his daughter, which he did; and that he would never permit either one or other ever to darken his door, which he didn't.

That is the whole story. After a time Bill Smith and old Brown's daughter got on pretty well; some people said that they were most attached to each other, and lived very happily; but I have my own opinion on the subject. Bill Smith has, I believe, a large practice and a family to match in one of the midland counties, but this I know only from hearsay, for, at my wife's solicitation, all connection between us was severed shortly after our strange marriage.

As for myself, what have I to complain



of? My wife's fortune is certainly all in her own hands, and can never under any circumstances belong to me: a state of affairs which I think demands remedy: but my allowance is not illiberal. My wife's acquaintances and I never perfectly understood each other from a social point of view, but in the seclusion of my club I am safe from their annoyance. We have no family, and I am consequently free from the domestic troubles which must beset poor Smith.

Sometimes I think of the Lavinia Brown who was once all my own, and speculate on what might have been but for that wonderful mixed marriage; but such thoughts are unprofitable, and underserving the attention of a well-regulated mind. Certainly she was very handsome, and my wife is not generally considered good-looking; but beauty is only superficial, and never in itself brings independence to a man.

I have often been told that destiny was the sole cause of the whole affair. I beg to differ from that view. Destiny, I will admit, may not have been entirely absent from the case, but, to the last, I shall maintain that the prime mover of the whole disaster was that confoundedly stupid fellow, Bill Smith.

#### HALL-MARKING.

THERE is something peculiar in the English usages connected with articles manufactured in gold and silver. In most other departments of industry the purchaser is left to find out for himself whether the commodities are what they profess to be, and worth the money he pays for them: exercising his sagacity and experience in shielding himself from fraud.

Of course there are some things regarding which the legislature thinks it proper to interfere; such as the adulteration of food and beverages, the protection of patented inventions and registered designs, and matters as to which individuals are not so well able to protect themselves—i.e. the safety of mines and collieries, &c. But articles so durable as gold and silver manufactures, except the sterling coin of the realm, are not often thus guarded by a shield of protection. A parliamentary committee has recently brought to light much curious information touching the origin and nature of the custom now under notice.

It appears that the hall-marking of plate

and other manufactures in gold and silver arose out of the powers and privileges conferred by royal charter, in the days when the City guilds or companies were in their prime. The guild in this instance was the Goldsmiths' Company, and the hall was their central building where the marking was effected. If the hall-marking were not connected with the imposition of any tax or duty on the articles made, few of the better members of the trade would make much objection to it: leaving the complainings and discontent to those makers who, like the man who cheated Moses Primrose (in the Vicar of Wakefield), "made spectacles for sale, and not for use."

The manufacture of gold and silver plate in the United Kingdom, if increasing, does so very slowly, despite the growing wealth of the nation. Whether this stationary energy is due to the duty is a point on which those engaged in the trade differ in opinion. After some changes from a duty to a license, the duties were reimposed about a century ago, eight shillings per ounce being charged on gold, and sixpence per ounce on silver. Just before the beginning of the present century they were increased in the one case to sixteen shillings, and in the other to one shilling. There was again an augmentation seven years afterwards in regard to silver, the duty on which was fixed at fifteen pence; not with any reference to the interests of either buyers or sellers, but simply because the Government needed increased revenues. About sixty years back the duties were fixed at seventeen shillings per ounce on gold, and eighteen pence on silver; and so they have remained ever since. In Ireland different rates were adopted from those in Great Britain; but in recent years all sections of the United Kingdom have been treated alike in this matter. If the extent of the manufacture be nearly stationary, this is attributed to three causes. First, changes of fashion, which lead to the adoption of other materials as substitutes for the precious metals in several kinds of ornamental and even useful articles. Secondly, the durability of gold and silver plate, which results in a large trade in second-hand goods. And thirdly, perhaps principally, the development of the electro-plate manufacture, which began to be definitely established about thirty-five years ago, and has been rapidly growing ever since.

Some of the complaints against the hall-marking system are, as we have said,



founded strictly on the question of license and duties. The list of articles exempted from duty is long and apparently capricious: based upon no intelligible principle, except perhaps the necessity of collecting the duty by means of the assay offices, and consequently of exempting from duty all articles which cannot be assayed without damaging or defacing, or which are too small to be marked with the assay or hall stamp. In consequence, numerous ornamental articles in common use, such as chains and bracelets, escape payment of the duty, not because their material is different from that of similar articles which are liable to duty, but simply because the duty cannot be collected for the want of a hall-mark. Another unfairness, as many deem it, is that electro-plate pays no duty, although it is certain that a larger and larger amount of silver bullion is used every year in this manufacture.

To the principle of compulsory assaying and marking it is admitted that some objections exist; objections which would probably be accepted as conclusive, if duties were now for the first time proposed to be levied. But in this country the system has existed, substantially in its present form, since the reign of Edward the First. Whatever may be said *per contra*, there can be but little doubt that it has resulted in the creation and maintenance of a high standard of excellence for all British assayed articles; which has not only enhanced the reputation of our handiwork at home and abroad, but has also created a large amount of private wealth, readily convertible by reason of the guarantees of value which the hall-marks afford. It appears probable, from the enquiries that have been made, that most British manufacturers, and a still larger proportion of the dealers in gold and silver hall-marked articles, desire a continuance of the present system. The public certainly do not complain of it; and it appears that foreign makers of gold and silver watch-cases, or the sellers of such cases, send them to this country to be hall-marked in yearly increasing numbers. True, their motive may not bear the test of rigid scrutiny, seeing that something deceptive is intended to make the non-guaranteed pass off as guaranteed; but it shows the high foreign estimate of our hall-marks. The assay officers know that this is done; but they are not legally allowed to refuse to hall-mark watch-cases when brought for assay by registered dealers.

The parliamentary committee which we have mentioned recognise in this practice a certain amount of unfairness towards British manufacturers. They report that "until the practice of hall-marking foreign watch-cases sprang up, the British hall-marks were taken to mean British workmanship; and your committee cannot doubt that foreign watches in watch-cases so marked are frequently sold as of British manufacture. Your committee are therefore of opinion that all foreign-made watch-cases assayed in this country ought to be impressed with an additional distinctive mark (the letter F, by reason of its resemblance to existing marks, is not sufficiently distinctive) indicative of foreign manufacture; and the law ought to be altered accordingly." At present, articles may be hall-marked, even if made of metal so debased as to contain only nine parts pure silver against fifteen of copper—called in the trade "nine carats fine." The committee recommend that no silver or so-called silver should be hall-marked if containing less than sixteen parts pure metal to eight of alloy.

The above particulars have been given because they relate to matters which have recently engaged parliamentary attention. But it is now necessary to touch upon other points, in order to render this very curious system clear and intelligible. How about Goldsmiths' Hall itself, the famous place so closely connected with the subject? How about the Goldsmiths' Company, to whom the hall belongs, and by whom such remarkable powers are wielded? And how about the trade arrangements for conducting the hall-marking?

Only a comparatively few of the vast number of persons who throng the City ever see Goldsmiths' Hall. It stands in a quiet narrow street behind the General Post Office. When the present noble structure was about to be erected the Company explained to their architect the reasons why that spot was adopted; and admirably did Mr. Hardwick adapt his plans to these conditions. Even other architects (not always the most impartial critics) generally admire the building. There are four complete frontages or façades, each a symmetrical architectural feature. A noble Corinthian entablature runs round the entire building. Entering at the eastern portals, we find ourselves in a square vestibule, at the back of which is a beautiful screen in front of the main staircase. Around are various rooms and

offices wherein the daily business of the Company is conducted. All beyond this is sacred from the vulgar gaze of the unprivileged public. Looking up through the grand staircase we obtain a foretaste of the glories to come. Around are galleries and passages leading to various halls and superb rooms; while overhead, in the centre, is the richly-carved ceiling of the dome; which dome has a screen of Corinthian columns running around it, adorned with pictures and statues. Two doors, between and behind these columns, lead into the livery hall, in which the liverymen of the company meet; and others to the court room, for the meetings of the Court of Assistants, with portraits and statues, and a small sacrificial altar dug up from the Roman remains found beneath the present City of London. The drawing-room next to the court-room is surpassingly brilliant—indeed, one of the most superb saloons in the metropolis; and the court dining-room is not much less so. A struggle has been maintained between the Goldsmiths and the Fishmongers as to which shall maintain the most magnificent hall; and neither will yield precedence to the other in this matter. Suffice to say that the former are well proud of their central headquarters.

And now, who are the persons who own this fine property, and constitute the Goldsmiths' Company? At present they comprise a Master (sometimes the sovereign of the realm), a prime Warden, three other Wardens, twenty-one Assistants, and a hundred and fifty Liverymen. The chief executive officer is the Clerk, who is credited with the possession of a highly lucrative post, although the amount of emolument is not revealed to the ear of the groundlings.

This flourishing state of affairs has of course arisen gradually. Six or seven centuries ago the goldsmiths and silversmiths of London were reputed for their skill; they were also in many instances wealthy men; the monarchs were oftensadly in need of ready cash; and thus the goldsmiths and the monarchs frequently had dealings in money matters, the former as lenders and the latter as borrowers. In fact, the goldsmiths were in those days the chief bankers, for banking had not then been established as a regular and distinct trade. Upwards of six hundred years ago the goldsmiths executed some beautiful work for Edward the First; he thereupon

gave them great powers and privileges, and they were not slow in asking for more. These powers were conferred upon them in numerous charters by Edward the Third, Richard the Second, and other sovereigns. Most arbitrary and monopolising did the favoured guild become: first compelling all the members of the trade in the City to submit to their regulations; then endeavouring to extend their supervision to the provinces; and keeping a very sharp eye upon foreigners, sometimes with a view of shutting out them and their wares altogether, at others of placing them under rigid restrictions. When they became powerful and wealthy, the Goldsmiths' Company fought fiercely for precedence with the Fishmongers' and the Merchant Taylors' Companies—fought literally, for their adherents had many a battle in Cheapside and other streets of the City, not unfrequently with sanguinary results.

But it is not only in the gold and silver plate and jewellery manufactures that the Goldsmiths' Company and their hall-mark are concerned. The watch-making trade is also interested by reason of the gold and silver cases usually adopted. This trade, at first scattered about the City, has gradually become centred in the district of Clerkenwell, and a very curious system it is. Take the Post Office London Directory; consult that portion which relates to the trades of the metropolis, and look under the headings "Gold," "Silver," "Jewellery," and "Watch," with the various cross-references. It will then be seen how amazingly numerous are the distinct branches of manufacturing industry; while the Street Directory will equally well show how closely they cluster in and around Clerkenwell. Lloyd Square, Northampton Square, King Square, Myddleton Street, Exmouth Street, Mount Pleasant, Rosoman Street, Clerkenwell Close, St. John's Square, Amwell Street, Percival Street, Spencer Street, all are well-nigh packed with the workers in gold and silver, jewellery, trinkets, clocks and watches. Sometimes a chamber-master will employ only a son or an apprentice, while working at the bench himself; and from this minimum there are all grades up to fifty hands or more. The most trifling articles only are made in many of these places; while others turn out the larger and more showy wares.

Looking at the watch trade alone, it may fairly be averred that English watches

are still the best that are made by hand, strong and durable, good timekeepers, but necessarily expensive through being made by workmen who could hardly live on the wages current in most continental countries. A factory for employing steam-worked machinery has been tried in Clerkenwell, but somehow with not much success. Some of the movements or inner works are made at Coventry and at Prescott, but the general making in London is wholly by hand.

Clerkenwell complains of Swiss competition, and not wholly without cause. Among the villages in the northern parts of Switzerland the people are mostly employed in outdoor avocations; but, during the long, dreary, dark, and bitter-cold days of winter, industry finds a scope for its exercise within doors. Whole families, even down to very young children, are engaged in watch-making. The father superintends the whole, while the other members of the family make such parts as come within their skill. The product is sold to dealers at Geneva and other towns, who collect watch-cases from some, and various inner parts from others, and make up, decorate, and regulate the watches. The prices at which they can be sold are almost incredible for their lowness. We can vouch for the fact that a Geneva watch, after numerous intermediate charges and profits, is obtainable in London for twenty shillings, sufficiently good to render useful service for fifteen years or more.

Clerkenwell also mourns over the competition of the watches now made in America by machinery. At Waltham, in Massachusetts, a large factory is employed in the trade. Nearly six hundred watches per day have been there made, timed, and regulated. Something like a thousand workpeople are busily occupied, of whom four-fifths are women and girls, men being employed chiefly in keeping the machinery in order, putting the works together, regulating, and testing them. Women are found to be particularly fitted for the delicate parts of a watch. All the working parts—axles, pivots, screws—are made by them, with the aid of beautiful machines. The workrooms are comfortable, and everything in perfect order. Delicate gauges measure the drill-holes for the jewelling, one-thousandth of an inch being regarded as almost too coarse as a unit or standard. Some of the pieces worked upon are so small as to be seen only through a micro-

scope. High-class watches are not yet largely made in this establishment: the chief make being in middle-class goods, at moderate prices.

Clerkenwell, thus closely pressed by Swiss and American competitors, nevertheless turns out a goodly number of gold and silver watches, all of which are assayed and stamped at Goldsmiths' Hall. To accommodate manufacturers in different parts of the United Kingdom, similar hall-marking establishments are maintained at Birmingham, Chester, Dublin, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Exeter, and Sheffield. At the hall belonging to the great City company the watch-cases, after being assayed to determine the quality of the metal, are stamped. Although called simply the hall-mark, it consists of several symbols, each of which conveys a particular kind of information to the trade; one symbol denoting the date of the year. Clerkenwell also manufactures a large amount of gold and silver plate. Hence there is much going to and fro of messengers every day—now taking a parcel of watches, now a silver or silver-gilt salver or vase, now a pair of silver candlesticks. Not only does Goldsmiths' Hall take a large part in these busy doings, but Cornhill also. Many of the shops in that street are glittering with splendour in gold and silver goods, sometimes fashioned on the premises, sometimes in the hard-working district of Clerkenwell. The seller gets the credit of fine workmanship, the name of the real maker being mostly kept in the dark—a feature unfortunately known to exist in many of our departments of manufacture.

Thus it will be seen that the hall-marking of articles made in the precious metals is really a curious subject, worthy of attention.

## SET IN A SILVER SEA.

BY B. L. FARJEON.

### CHAPTER XV. RANF MAKES A RECORD.

"COME, Ranf, set upon paper a sign that shall remain when you have passed away. Those who are too quick of speech, if they are not overbarbened by folly, have often reason to wish that they had been born dumb. It is otherwise with me. I am by habit slow with my tongue, having learnt to choose my words by having but rare opportunity to use them. That has been my fate, and I do not care to grumble at it; but having a sense, it is necessary to



exercise it if you wish to retain it. Who keeps his eyes closed for a year will be blind when he opens them. One day I may have need to use my tongue to some purpose. This white paper is a companion, this pen my tongue; I can hear the words I trace.

"It is good I had some sort of education. I had time for it, and I acquired it in a singular way. No one to interrupt or vex me, I had one grand master, Nature, whose book is never shut to those who would read its wonders. My other masters were my own wits.

"While I live no eye but mine shall see what I write. When I am dead, it is Evangeline's, with all that I possess. It is not that I believe I shall die to-night or to-morrow, but it is as well to think of things. It is right that Evangeline should know something of my inner life, so that she may give men the lie who speak ill of me. There are plenty of them; let them have their way, but do not let them step into mine. A spirit within me might cry 'Strike!' and they would not live to rue.

"No, I shall not die to-night, but I will be prepared. Only up to a certain point are we our own masters; though steadfastness and determination will achieve most human desires, we are at the mercy of outward circumstances, which at any unexpected moment may snap the mortal thread. This morning I slipped upon a stone, and fell to a depth of a thousand feet before I recovered myself by catching at a branch of a tree which grew out of the rocks for my preservation. As I slid down over the sharp stones which cut my hands when I endeavoured to clutch them, I was certain that Death was not waiting for me in the depths below. Scores of years ago a seed was blown into a crevice, and a tree grew and forced the rocks asunder that I might be saved for my life's purpose. Those who pretend to study the science of Divine things, and who really understand them as well as a beetle, would raise their hands at this, if it paid them to do so. One man's belief is enough for a man, and I have mine. If in the world's scheme there is any sort of design, all things possible must be admitted. Even the unseen agencies by which we are surrounded, and whose mysterious power we can as easily control as circumvent, play their direct part in our lives. Sometimes they drive men mad. Human judgment has passed such a verdict upon me; that is no concern of

mine; I have long learnt to accept with scorn the judgment of mankind.

"I am quite calm, though I am sorely wounded. Bodily pain does not distress me; I can trifle with it, argue with it, laugh at it, defy it, and conquer it. I have in my time suffered torments, but it has been the anguish of the soul that has conquered me and made me groan. I am bruised and cut, and shall not be able to descend the mountain for two or three days at least.

"I saw a flower that shone like gold, with a dusky mellow lustre such as I see in some of the autumn sunsets as I stand upon the highest peak of this mountain of snow. Its peculiarity was that its inner cup reflected a light of burnished silver. It was not within easy reach, and I could only hope to obtain it by stepping on a large stone which projected from the outer surface of the precipice. I established a foothold, with a firm grasp of the earth behind me, leant forward to detach the flower by its root, when the stone slipped from beneath me. I slipped with it, and was saved by the tree. Wounded as I was, I could not possibly have reached the mountain's top by climbing the surface of the rock, but to my surprise I found in the rear of this tree an easier path to safety. It could not have been made by human hands—

"I am arrested in the current of my thoughts by a notch. Why could this hidden path not have been made by human hands? There can be no doubt that the islanders speak the truth when they say that no man but myself has ventured into these strange regions for generations. But two hundred years ago there lived upon the mount a man, self-banished, whose life was cursed by love and jealousy. He grew old here, and passed his days in loneliness, without human or other visible companionship. The mountain was his then, as it is mine now. He essayed a wonderful task, and may have cut this path to assist in its accomplishment. It is not an unreasonable idea. When I am able to move about I will convince myself whether the narrow way has been made by nature or man.

"What kind of life did he live upon this mount? He was utterly alone; not a living being, not even an animal, to hold converse with! Removed from the world by an impassable gulf, dreading the future, seeking to propitiate it by tears and supplication, and self-abasement. Both fool and coward!



"A handsome man, they say, a hero in form and purpose, wise, and strong, and capable. That is how men judge of others—by outward signs; so do they judge of me. But I have taught them something already, and may teach them more. A new character for you to play, Ranf—a braggart. Although you are deformed and a hunchback, although your limbs are at odds with one another and you are in height but half a man, I know under what conditions you could elevate yourself into a god to be worshipped by the crowd.

"There is a sound at my door of scratching and tearing, and now as of a body pushing with strength and violence. The door flies open.

"It is my dog Leontine. I left her in the lower hut two days ago, and she has sought me out. She lies now at my feet, devoted and tame, as handsome and as strong as a lioness. Had she found me dead, she would have licked my body, and perchance have shed tears over me. She has in her higher qualities than animate some human beings I know. I do not say this because Leontine loves me: I say it out of the depths of my life and experience.

"She thought I was in pain; she looked up at me with her great soft eyes, and, when I smiled at her to assure her that I was at my ease, she nestled down comfortably in satisfaction. What would you do for me, Leontine? fight for me, die for me? Were you a woman would you love me? If you could speak, and answered yes, I would stab you where you lie.

"If I had been born straight, Leontine could not love me more. It is perhaps fortunate for me that I came into the world crooked and misshapen. Something is mine. The love of goats and birds and dogs is worth having—when you can't get the love of a woman.

"Leontine, I will confess to you. You will not betray me. It is long, long ago in the past since the sunlight, peeping in upon me, stole away to flowers and blades of grass better worth ripening, and left me in the dark to thrive as best I could. I was born in the dark, Leontine, and lived in a forest, in the very depths of it, farther away from men than I am now. I have kept no count of the years. About me was a woman who said she was my mother, and gave me my name, such as no other man ever bore. You see, Leontine, I had nothing in common with human-kind. I was much alone; often for weeks together. We lived in a wretched hut,

and I was left to do pretty much as I liked. Certain rules, however, were set for me. I dared not wander beyond a defined boundary; frightful stories were related to me of awful creatures prowling within a mile of our hut, and of what they would do to me if I ventured within their reach. I had no desire to do so; I made acquaintance with bird and beast, but not with man. I had no reason to believe that there was another child in the world besides myself. My mother, who was as hideous as myself, and who never gave me a kind word, bade me, on pain of torture and death, not to show myself if any human creature came in view. When she left me, saying she would return to-morrow, or next week, or next month, I felt no regret. Leontine, I kiss you; you are grateful; you know it is a sign of love. I do love you, my dog, else I should not embrace you. I do not remember this woman ever placing her lips upon my face.

"It was no loss. I felt no need of kisses. There was always plenty to eat in our hut; as a child I learnt to snare birds and prepare them for the table; we had a bit of land where vegetables grew; I lived the life of an animal.

"It is almost a wonder how I learned to speak; for this at least I can thank my mother. When she was away I talked to the trees, and fancied I knew their language as their branches bent and their leaves rustled in the wind. Then I could bark like a dog. I have not done so since I have been on the isle. Listen, Leontine.

"Ha! I startled you. Here is something more. I can send my voice outside this hut, and can make you think we are surrounded by your species. Listen again.

"I have done a fine thing. Leontine is gone, searching for the bodies that gave forth those sounds. I cannot continue without her companionship. I will wait till she returns.

"She is here, standing by my side, with a listening look in her eyes. I will fool you no more, Leontine. Go, shut the door, and rest in peace.

"The voices and songs of birds I also learned to know and imitate. I was entirely a woodland creature, and I cannot say with truth that I was unhappy; but I was conscious of a void in my life. Define it I could not; I seemed to be waiting for a sign, and even, at times, to be yearning for it. That was because I was human.

"A task was given me to perform.

Beyond the boundary was a forest of deer, which gentlemen amused themselves in hunting. When a deer strayed within our boundary I was to chase it over the border. Of these events I kept a record in a small book, and it was by this means I learnt to form written characters, and, imperfectly, to read. The records were simple, and ran thus: On such a day, in the morning, afternoon, or night, there appeared a deer, of such an age. I knew the age of the deer by its antlers. It was an easy task to frighten these gentle animals away; but one day a deer turned and evaded me, and, when I hurt it with a stone, attacked me. I was gored and wounded badly, but the victory was mine. Then I knew that I was strong.

"My mother was terribly angry with me, and said that if the gentlemen knew I had killed a deer they would take my life.

"Or I should take theirs," I answered. "I am ready for another fight. It is rare sport."

"You are a fool," my mother said; "if you crossed the path of a gentleman, he would kick you aside."

"Why would he do that?" I asked, in curiosity.

"Look at yourself in clear water," replied my mother, shaking her fist at me; "you are neither beast nor human."

"I laughed at her anger; there was nothing in it to frighten me. As to looking at myself in a clear pool, it was a thing I had never thought of doing; no fair stream of water lay within our boundary. But when my laughter ceased, I became thoughtful and moody, and my mother's words, carrying in them a sting I did not rightly comprehend, rankled in my mind a long time afterwards.

"Growing bolder with years, and less willing to be told I must go, here and must not go there, and still less willing to obey, I plunged beyond the boundary, and came upon a building of stone, surrounded by a neglected garden. There were fruit trees in it, still bearing, and, as I ate some of the fruit, I looked admiringly at the stained and painted windows and at the beautiful house, the like of which I had never seen before.

"Who lives here?" I asked myself. "One of those gentlemen who would kick me from his path if I crossed it?"

"I knocked at the doors, without receiving an answer; I tried both doors and windows, and found them fast. There were pillars in the principal entrance,

reaching to a verandah, stretching out from some of the handsomest windows in the building. Determined to see the inside of the house, I climbed up one of these pillars, and stepped on to the verandah. One of the windows was loose; without breaking it I managed to open it, and by that means obtained entrance. The house was entirely deserted; not a sign of life was visible, with the exception of spider-webs in all the corners. The walls were hung with beautiful pictures, the furniture was gold and velvet, I could not hear my footfall as I walked on the thick pile-carpets. I strolled through the rooms in a kind of dream, and came to one into which the full sunlight was pouring. It was a bedroom, with delicate fripperies in it which I handled with care. There were two pictures in this room which fixed my attention; one of a gentleman, dressed in court fashion, the other of a lovely young girl. The faces in both the pictures singularly affected me: the features of the girl were faultlessly beautiful; the handsome mouth of the gentleman was opened, and showed his regular white teeth, his hands were delicately shaped, and there was an air of distinction about him which was new to me. I passed my hand over my face, and was seized by a longing to look at myself in clear water, as my mother had bid me do. I turned to a table upon which stood a mirror, the first I had ever seen, and in the glass I saw a reflection of myself.

"What kind of monster was it that peered eagerly forward to look into my face? Could it be the hideous and faithful likeness of one who was 'neither beast nor human,' or a juggle created by some fiend to madden me? I dashed my fist into the mirror, and cut my fingers to the bone. I did not feel the pain of my wounded flesh. My soul was quivering with the keener torture of the indignity which had been fastened upon me by Nature. Why was I sent into the world in this shape, a horror to all that beheld me? If I could destroy myself as I had destroyed the reflection of myself, would it not be a good thing done? The idea held me for an instant only. No. Why should I take my life? Better to think myself other than I was, transformed to beauty, in the likeness of the handsome gentleman whose portrait I was again examining. Without any absolute direction of my will I aped the graceful posture

of this fine gentleman, aped the motion of his dainty hands, aped his smile and the pose of his head. In this disguise I gazed at the portrait of the lovely girl, and kissed my hand to her; and the next moment, with some sudden notion of the truth, I burst into a passion of tears, and staggered from the room. Down the stairs I stumbled with but one thought stirring in my mind—despisal of myself. I found myself now in a room which, but for the dust that lay heavily about it, I might have supposed had been quite recently occupied. Bottles and glasses were there; in the glasses were the crusted dregs of wine, and thick stains of spilt liquor were on the table; two chairs lay overturned on the ground, and by their side a rusty rapier. I took no conscious mental note of these objects, but they imprinted themselves upon my mind. I was in a paroxysm of rage at my deformity. On a sideboard were some bottles which had not been uncorked. I knocked the necks off two, and pouring the contents into a huge silver goblet with double handles, I drank the wine with greedy enjoyment. It exhilarated me, and changed my mood to one of passionate hope and exultation. I shouted, I sang, I danced, and drank more wine, until I fell to the ground and slept like a log.

"I did not awake till early morning, and I opened my eyes to the singing of birds. The sounds came from my own lips, inspired perhaps by a woodland dream. I rose to my feet, and thought of all that had passed; the wine had not affected me otherwise than to make me sleep; my head was perfectly clear.

"I made a further examination of the deserted house, and walked through the rooms, from the top of the house to the bottom. The doors that were locked I opened with ease, even the cellar doors, which led to vaults where rare old wine lay buried, ripening to rarer perfection.

"There remained but one room still unexplored; it was locked, and had not yielded easily to my pressure. I returned to it, and using all my strength, forced it open. Leontine, it was full of books. The walls were lined with them; protected by glass cases from dust, they reached from floor to ceiling. The windows were emblazoned with richly-coloured pictures; beautiful groups in bronze were set about; the ceiling was carved into quaint faces, whose eyes looked down upon me with solemn import, whose

features were instinct with life. Figures of armed men stood in niches, mute guardians of the rich treasures of the room. I approached them in fear; I touched them, and they did not strike me down; the armour encased no forms of living flesh. These figures, the models in bronze, the carvings, the subdued light, the eloquent books, impressed me deeply. In a corner stood a large case of wood, the outer surface of which was inlaid with figures of birds and beasts and objects unfamiliar to me. I raised the lid, and saw a long row of ivory tablets. I pressed my fingers upon them, and a deep voice issued forth, which floated through the walls, and died gradually away in the distance. When the sound fell upon my ears I started back, fearing that I had released a spirit; but presently, the sound being gone, I touched other keys, and produced notes of sadness, of joy, of solemnity. Now came the sound of wedding bells, now the sound of a funeral dirge. It was the first time I had heard music different from the natural music of field and forest.

"I was in another world; I heard voices; I saw visions; a new spirit was born within me. I was no longer Ranf the deformed! I was a human being, with a soul to be moved by passion.

"Leontine, I believe you have a soul. In another state of being we shall wander side by side in friendly communion, thinking of our life in the Silver Isle. You will be faithful and true, I know; we shall understand things better then.

"Perhaps then, Evangeline, still living, will be reading these lines, and will send a tender thought into the air for the cripple who would yield up his life for her. You see, my dog, there is nothing else that binds me to this world—not even you. I was growing into the spiritual likeness of a savage, my case a fitting one for a world of evil thought, and she brought back to me my better self. I was ready so to hate myself and all mankind that no deed would have been too black for my mind to conceive and my hands to perform. It is no slight service, Leontine, to have your sense of self-respect restored to you, to be made to feel, through the love of a little child, that, twisted out of all proportion as you are—through no fault of your own—your nature is in kinship with much that is beautiful and bright in earth and air. The clouds, the flowers, the balmy air, the sweet sounds of forest life, and I, are of one family. The clouds shine upon me,

the flowers incline towards me, the balmy air kisses me, the harmony of nature is not less sweet when I am by. It is only man that is unkind. And I, knowing the world, know that to bend and fawn and lick the hand that wrongs you, destroys within you the spirit of manhood, and brings you to the moral level of the snake, that crawls upon its belly and lives in slime. So I give scorn for scorn, and make the best of what I was not able to avoid.

"I took possession of the deserted mansion, and no soul disturbed me for years. During all that time not a human being but myself entered the house. I haunted it in secret, and my mother was not able to discover where I spent the days. She followed me, and I tricked her; led her over marsh and water-field, and through the prickly intricacies of the bush; I ran, and walked, and lingered, with her behind me, and never turned to see; then I led her a dance back to our wretched hut, laughing to myself at the knowledge that I had a palace of my own, whose treasures of art had opened the windows of my soul, and let in Heaven's light.

"Where do you hide?" asked my mother.

"In a cave," I answered.

"Alone?"

"No."

"With whom, then?" she cried suspiciously.

"With shadows," I said, laughing in her face, "that have life, but cannot speak."

"She asked me whether I was a fool, a knave, or a madman. I asked her in return whether she was really my mother? She aimed a blow at me, that struck the air.

"You can tell me one thing," I said composedly; "who owns us?"

"A great lord."

"A man, do you mean?"

"No; a gentleman."

"A gentleman, and not a man; then he is in bad case. And all this land is his."

"Aye, for miles around."

"Why does he not come here?"

"You had better ask him when you see him."

"I will. When will he come?"

"When the whim seizes him; then you will be whipped."

"I think not. I would fling the man into the air who dared to touch me with hand or weapon."

"It was her turn to laugh now.

"You are a slave," she said, "as I am. You do not know what great men can do."

"I will wait and learn," I said calmly.

"I saw that she was regarding me with curiosity.

"You are changed, Ranf."

"I glanced over my shoulder at my hump. 'It has grown larger,' I said; 'it is big enough for a man.'

"You are one in years."

"I was glad to hear that."

"So," I said commandingly, "mother or no mother, treat me as a man."

"I compelled respect from her. It was a poor triumph, Leontine, and it shames me now to think I felt proud of it. . . .

"I am interrupted. There is a tapping at my door, as of some gentle creature desiring shelter. Leontine's head is inclined towards the door, and her soft eyes are fixed upon mine. Go, my dog, and discover who it is that seeks admittance in manner so gracious. . . .

"It is one of my white doves from the lower hut. What brings you here, my bird? Have you a message from spirit-land tied under your wing? Am I summoned? No, my dove, not yet. I shall live my time, I believe. But it is kind of you to come to see your wounded master, though I must have taught you badly that you should come without being bidden. This time I forgive you. Fly to your dovecote and find your mate.